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COMPOSER ARAM KHACHATURIAN IS DEAD
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE WORLD RENOWNED SOVIET COMPOSER, ARAM KHACHATURIAN, DIED MONDAY, MAY 1, ACCORDING TO THE SOVIET NEWS AGENCY TASS, AFTER A LONG ILLNESS. HE WAS 74 YEARS OLD. WITH A MEMOIR OF THE COMPOSER'S CAREER WHICH SPANNED MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY, HERE IS....

VOICE :

ARAM KHACHATURIAN WAS KNOWN AROUND THE WORLD FOR HIS EXUBERANT, RICHLY COLORED MUSIC, MUCH OF IT BASED ON THE FOLK RHYTHMS OF HIS NATIVE CAUCASUS. HE WAS A PROLIFIC COMPOSER WHO GAINED WIDE POPULARITY IN THE SOVIET UNION FOR HIS SYMPHONIES, CONCERTOS, FILM SCORES, HIS MANY TRADITIONAL SONGS AND, ABOVE ALL, FOR HIS BALLET MUSIC; PARTICURLY FOR "SPARTACUS," -- WRITTEN FOR THE BOLSHOI BALLET -- AND, PERHAPS, MOST POPULAR IN THE WEST, THE "GAYNE" BALLET, WRITTEN FOR LENINGRAD'S KIROV COMPANY.

KHACHATURIAN WAS BORN IN TIFLIS, NOW TBILISI, THE CAPITAL OF SOVIET GEORGIA, THE SON OF AN ARMENIAN BOOKBINDER. AS A COMPOSER, HE WAS ALWAYS DEEPLY INFLUENCED BY THE MUSIC OF ARMENIA AND THE WHOLE TRANS-CAUCASUS AREA. "THE NATIONAL FOLK MUSIC," HE ONCE SAID, "WHICH I LEARNED AS A CHILD IS THE PERMANENT NATURAL SOIL FOR MY ENTIRE CREATIVE ACTIVITY."

KHACHATURIAN BEGAN HIS MUSICAL CAREER AT THE AGE OF 20, WHEN HE ENTERED THE MOSCOW MUSICAL INSTITUTE AS A PIANO AND VIOLIN PLAYER. FOUR YEARS LATER, HE BEGAN STUDYING COMPOSITION AT THE MOSCOW CONSERVATORY, WHERE HE GRADUATED WITH HONORS AND REMAINED

AS A POST-GRADUATE STUDENT UNTIL 1937. IN LATER YEARS, HE ROSE TO HIGH OFFICE IN THE USSR UNION OF COMPOSERS.

DURING THE STALINIST ERA, HOWEVER, WHILE KHACHATURIAN WAS SAID TO BE AN OUTSPOKENLY ENTHUSIASTIC COMMUNIST, HE CAME UNDER FIRE -- ALONG WITH HIS TWO SOMEWHAT MORE ILLUSTRIOUS CONTEMPORARIES, DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH AND SERGE PROKOFIEV -- FOR "FORMALISM." THE THREE COMPOSERS WERE FORCED TO APOLOGIZE FOR THEIR ALLEGED "SHORTCOMINGS" AND WERE TOLD TO INTRODUCE "REALISM" INTO THEIR MUSIC. EVIDENTLY, KHACHATURIAN, WITH HIS NATURAL AFFINITY FOR THE MUSIC OF THE PEOPLE, HAD NO PROBLEM IN FULFILLING THIS REQUIREMENT; HE WON THE ORDER OF LENIN AND FOUR STALIN PRIZES.

AFTER THE DEATH OF STALIN, IN 1953, KHACHATURIAN BEGAN URGING GREATER FREEDOM IN THE ARTS. IN A SPEECH IN 1956, HE SAID THAT A MUSICIAN SHOULD NOT HAVE TO BOTHER ABOUT MEETING THE DEMANDS OF COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY; HE SHOULD NOT HAVE TO WRITE PIECES ABOUT ECONOMIC PROJECTS, SUCH AS THE THEN DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN VIRGIN LANDS.

KHACHATURIAN TRAVELED WIDELY IN THE WEST, CONDUCTING CONCERTS IN ITALY, BRITAIN, SWEDEN AND LATIN AMERICA. HE MADE TWO VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES. THE SECOND TIME, IN 1968, HE CONDUCTED THE NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IN THE AMERICAN PREMIERE OF HIS "CONCERTO RHAPSODY FOR CELLO," IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

DURING ONE OF HIS VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES, THE COMPOSER SPOKE DISPARAGINGLY ABOUT THE PIECE OF MUSIC FOR WHICH HE IS CHIEFLY KNOWN IN THIS COUNTRY: THE EVER-POPULAR "SABRE DANCE" FROM THE "GAYNE" BALLET. "COMPARED TO THE BODY OF MY WORK," HE TOLD A GROUP OF AMERICANS, "THE SABRE DANCE IS ONLY A BUTTON ON MY SHIRT."

A BUTTON IT MAY BE, BUT BECAUSE IT EXPRESSES SO WELL THE EXCITEMENT, VITALITY AND COLOR OF HIS NATIVE LAND, CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS COMPOSER, WE WILL PLAY IT FOR YOU NOW IN MEMORY OF ARAM KHACHATURIAN WHO DIED THIS WEEK (MONDAY) AFTER A LONG AND PRODUCTIVE LIFE IN MUSIC.

TAPE" CUT ONE: SABRE DANCE

BML/RCS